

CHALLENGES IN THE NEW NORTHEAST ASIAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: ISSUES OF MD AND JAPANESE HISTORY

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The September 11 terrorist attack on the United States marks a strategic turning point in the global security situation as well as in Northeast Asia. A look at what happened before September 11, 2001, will cast a light, though imperfect, to help think in advance about the new security picture.

It can be argued that the missile defense(MD) program of the US and the issue of Japan's attitude towards its colonial and wartime history past are the two core issues around which fault lines among major players have formed. MD forms a barrier between the US on the one hand, and China and North Korea on the other. Japan and Taiwan seem to be inclined to the US position, while South Korea appears to maintain calculated ambiguity somewhat sympathetic to the US position. The colonial history poses another fault line alienating Japan from China, South Korea, North Korea and Taiwan, which complicates American efforts to strengthen bilateral ties between US allies, Japan and South Korea.

MD and the history issue, vividly show how complicated it is to build a durable structure of cooperation in Northeast Asia. They also highlight the inherent impediments facing

each of the major players. But they do not represent all the unresolved issues, and the September 11th terrorist attack also adds yet another element to the dilemma. The upside is that the incident has brought Sino-US security relations closer. The downside is that it hardens the US perception of the North Korean regime.

It is still too early to predict how the overall balance sheet of the security equation following the incident will look like in the next couple of years. But it will affect the security environment of Northeast Asia in a very fundamental way.

I. Introduction

The September 11 terrorist attack on the United States marks a strategic turning point in the global security situation as well as in Northeast Asia. The incident, though extremely tragic, provides the United States with the ironic opportunity to enhance strategic cooperation with Russia and China, who share a common interest with the US in combating terrorism mainly due to their respective concerns in Chechnya and Xinjiang.

Trilateral entente among the three big powers is an unexpected development that would have been unimaginable before September 11, 2001. Controversies over the American missile defense plan and the EP-3 reconnaissance plane incident were considered prime examples to highlight the undercurrent of division and suspicion existing among three big powers.¹ The newly-found trilateral entente has the positive spill-over effect of silencing, at least temporarily, these issues that may

1 Gaye Christoffersen, "The Role of East Asia in Sino-American Relations," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLII, No. 3, May/June 2002, pp. 374-376.

otherwise adversely affect US-Russia and US-China relations. It is not clear at this point, though, whether and, if so, how long this entente together with its positive spillover effect will last.

For North Korea, the aftermath of the September 11 incident is not good news in many ways. With the advent of the Bush administration, Pyongyang stalled in its efforts for better relations with Washington, the most coveted goal of DPRK foreign policy. Instead it refocused on strengthening its back yard through summit diplomacy with Russia and China, as well as trying for niches in Europe and other parts of the world. North Korea may have pursued this policy with the hope of increasing pressure on the United States, but that was dashed by September 11 with the emergence of the US-Russia-China entente. As long as the anti-terrorist campaign remains the top priority of the US-led international community, issues relating to North Korea will be sidelined, and its ambivalence about the US-led anti-terrorist campaign will close the window of opportunity that would otherwise have been open to them for better relations with Washington.²

It is somewhat early to predict how the new security environment in Northeast Asia will look like following the conclusion of the US-led anti-terrorism campaign. It is clear that the terrorist attack and the US response have added uncertainty to the already volatile security environment in Northeast Asia.

In the meantime, a look at what happened before September 11, 2001, will cast a light, though imperfect, to help think in advance about the new security picture. The security situation here had already undergone significant adjustments, in particular the advent of a conservative administration in the United States, the rise of China, the conservative reorientation of Japan and the continuing volatility in potential hot spots such as North Korea and Taiwan.

2 Yinhay Ahn, "North Korea in 2001: at a Crossroads," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLII, No. 1, January/February 2002, pp. 46-55.

The world is paying special attention to the rapidly changing power relations surrounding the Korean peninsula. The United States has acted as the sole hegemonic power in the region. With the rise of China in the regional political/diplomatic, economic and military dynamics, however, Washington increasingly needs understanding, at least tacit, from China in devising any new regional order.³

Right after Bush's inauguration the US made a U-turn to the old conservative line that tries to secure national interest by means of strengthening military power. Such US policy is triggering concern not only from Northeast Asia but also from other regions of the world. Especially China, the only regional power that can compete with the US, has become highly sensitive over the US moves. Against this backdrop, the purpose of this paper is to examine the perspectives of the US, China, Japan and Korea on the impediments that could prevent the security environment in Northeast Asia from evolving in a stable manner.

A basic US strategy towards Northeast Asia is to extend its own military power and influence by expanding the Japanese military role in the region. Japan's neighbors are undoubtedly dubious about the expansion of Japanese military power, and recent moves by the rightist Koizumi cabinet aggravate such apprehension. The distortion of history textbooks and Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine have provoked strong reaction from Korea and China. Tokyo's right-wing, it is further worried, could lead to the much-feared rearmament of Japan. Japan's participation in the US missile defense (MD) program is also viewed with some skepticism, but Tokyo seems to be interested because such technological cooperation with the US through MD could boost Japanese defense capability. They may calculate that being on the American bandwagon could alleviate opposition from

3 Gaye Christoffersen, "The Role of East Asia in Sino-American Relations," pp. 374-396.

suspicious neighbors.

The Chinese view the MD with strong skepticism, fearing the American program will (1) rearm the Japanese military and ignite military competition in the region (2) lead to the military buildup of Taiwan and deteriorate the China-Taiwan relationship, and (3) destabilize regional peace and security. An arms race between the US and China, and between China and Japan will adversely affect the situation on the Korean peninsula which badly needs peace and stability to overcome its Cold War legacies.⁴

This paper examines the perspectives of US, Japan, China and the two Koreas regarding the MD program, and analyses how the issue affects security environment. It also discusses how Japanese distortion of school history textbooks and visits by Prime Minister Koizumi to the Yasukuni Shrine have had an impact on regional cooperation.

II. MD

1. US Position

The US, the largest nuclear power in the world, is initiating MD as a defense against attacks from rogue nations. Having gained the prestige of being the sole superpower in the post-Cold War era, the US is trying to extend its influence to design a new order in Northeast Asia. Although the Republican Party platform perceives China as a crucial nation in the security calculus of Northeast Asia, Japan, rather than China, is regarded as the US partner in the region.⁵ The Republican government deems China more as a strategic competitor than as a

4 Xiaoming Huang, "Managing Fluctuations in U.S.-China Relations," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XL, No. 2, March/April 2000, pp. 269-295.

5 Eerik K. Pratt, "Missile Defense Sponsors: Shifting Political Support for Strategic Defense after Reagan," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2001, pp. 11-72.

strategic partner. Washington now seems to regard China as attempting to change the balance of regional power in a way favorable to itself. It is argued that Washington should try to induce changes within China by cultivating inter-dependence in economic area. The US should also maintain close cooperative relationship with Japan so that Tokyo could check the power and ambition of Beijing. Care should be taken to separate security matters from economic and commercial relations so that Chinese reform and opening policy can be sustained.

If China does not abide by the principle of peaceful resolution of issues related to Taiwan, Washington will, under Republican control, take appropriate measures to defend Taiwan.⁶ The Republican Party supports the reinforcement of Taiwanese security law, and despite strong Chinese opposition, the US seems insistent on carrying out an MD program that involves Taiwan.

President Bush emphasizes the need for implementation of foreign policy based on firm policy objectives and the priority of national interest, while avoiding isolationism or indiscreet military commitment. He termed his policy "Distinctly American Internationalism."⁷ Bush advocates the foreign policy of combining military power with the unity of allies, in short, peace by means of power. Albeit reckless usage, military power will be used when the probability of attaining the objective is high. The Republican government would take a firm measure against North Korea when Pyongyang is perceived to have "crossed the red line" and injured the vital US national interest.

2. China's Position

China sticks to its position of opposing any attempt that could

6 Chen Shui-bien is gradually raising the level of demands for independence, and China is watching closely. August 3, 2002.

7 Speech by Governor George W. Bush, on Foreign Policy, Ronald Reagan Presidential library, November 19, 1999.

undermine its 'One China' policy. China, therefore, is strongly opposed to any US plan to include Taiwan in the MD program. China regards the plan as violating China's sovereignty, that the US is blocking the unification process of China, and argues that the US should remove North Korea from the black list of rogue nations and renounce the MD program for the sake of peace and security of Northeast Asia.⁸

Beijing's objection to the US MD program is based on its fear that (1) American intentions are to threaten the strategic balance and stability of the world, (2) the program will adversely affect international non-proliferation efforts and provoke arms race in Northeast Asia by inducing military build-up on the part of Taiwan and Japan, and (3) it will deteriorate China-Taiwan and China-Japan relationship.

In China's view, the underlying intention of the US MD program is to secure strategic advantage over China by nullifying its nuclear deterrence capability. Behind MD Beijing sees a US fear of China as "the most serious long-term challenge."⁹ China does not take the US rationale that MD is to defend the US from missile attacks by rogue nations as fully convincing, and views that the missile proliferation issue can be resolved by political and diplomatic means based on existing arms control regimes. China does welcome a sincere dialogue on MD between the United States and its allies and countries with a stake in the issue.

Chinese opposition to the US MD plan seems to be muted following the US withdrawal from the ABM treaty in June 2002. This weakened reaction of China reflects the two changing realities: 1) the emerging trend of Sino-US strategic entente for anti-terrorism following the

8 Xiaosiong Yi, "Dynamics of China's South Korea Policy: Assertive Nationalism, Beijing's Changing Strategic Evaluation of the U.S., and the North Korea Factor," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2000, pp. 71-102.

9 Andrew Scobell, "Crouching Korea, Hidden China: Bush Administration Policy toward Pyongyang and Beijing," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLII, No. 2, March/April, 2002, p. 343.

September 11th terrorist attack against the US; 2) the acquiescence to the US withdrawal from the ABM treaty by Russia, other party to the ABM treaty.

But, China's concern about the MD plan is not, completely gone, though muted. It remains very latent, and has the potential of resurfacing as a thorny issue in the Sino-US relations. The answer to these questions will depend on how the US addresses China's dual concern about the MD; 1) the possibility of China's strategic capability seriously undermined by MD; 2) another possibility of WMD arms race caused by Taiwan's participation in MD.

While the Chinese leadership is concerned with the world security situation and its relationship with the US, it falls short of renouncing the official line that peace and development are taking root, with multipolarism deepening and tension easing in the region. China is for constructing a new international order; based on the repackaged concept of "new security"¹⁰ developed during the period of 1996 to 1997 and the "five principles of co-existence" that Beijing adopted as its official position since the 1950s.

The Chinese leadership highlights three unchanged and three new concepts. The security specialists of China have consistently supported the three unchanged: (1) peace and development of international relations, (2) move to a multi-polar world and acceleration of economic globalization, and (3) easing of conflicts in the international community. The new concepts are: (1) proliferation of power politics and hege-

10 According to the address delivered by Jiang Zemin, the state premier, in March 1999 in Geneva, Swiss, regarding China's foreign policy, the "new security concept" comprises of four parts: 1) the focus of the new security concept should be mutual trust, reciprocity, equality and cooperation 2) the political foundation supporting world peace should be the five principles of coexistence and universally accepted norms that maintain international relations 3) economic background for world peace should be based on mutual cooperation and co-prosperity 4) the new security concept is a right approach for nations of equal status to resolve disputes by means of dialogue and compromise and thereby guarantee peace.

mony, 2) extension of military engagements, and (3) widening gap between the advanced and underdeveloped nations. The three new ones reflect an increasing worry that China feels over the US tendency towards unilateralism.

3. Korea's Position

With regard to the US MD plan, Korea takes a position of strategic ambivalence by expressing a reserved understanding on American intentions. It is difficult for Seoul to totally ignore Pyongyang's suspicion over MD, because North Korea is one of the rogue states from whose attack MD is supposed to defend. South Korea needs to take into account improved relations with North Korea together with China's position that opposes the project.

South Korea should be careful not to provoke North Korea, while having to satisfy both US and China who avow contradictory positions. In fact, unilateral foreign policies are hard to meet conflicting interests in and around the Korean peninsula, in the turbulent era of the twenty-first century. In order to satisfy or persuade both China and the US, Korea needs a sophisticated foreign policy. China makes straightforwardly clear that the US will be held responsible for the deterioration of the US-China relationship and the stalemate of the inter-Korean relationship. But joining the bandwagon of anti-US sentiments is not a wise choice for Seoul. South Korea will not be able to persuade the US through the argument that unilateral pressure against North Korea will arouse anti-US sentiments in Korea. Seoul should take the position that a souring relationship between US and China will weaken Seoul's role in Northeast Asia as well as undermine the national interests of both the United States and China.¹¹

11 Yinhay Ahn, "The Structural Dynamics of Sino-American Relations and the Korean Peninsula," *Conflict and Cooperation between China and the United States*, organized by the Korean Association of International Studies, August 24, 2002.

Korean people generally see reinforcement of Japanese military as undesirable to the security of Korea. Japan is perceived to be attempting to build up its military force under the American security umbrella. Distrust against Japan is traceable to its colonial rule. Korea's concern on Japan's getting on the bandwagon for the MD project together with the reluctance to pinpoint North Korea as one of the possible targets lies behind the Korean position of strategic ambiguity.

III. Distortion of Textbooks and Yasukuni Shrine Issue

1. Japan's position

With the end of the Cold War, Japan consciously began to reestablish its status as a "normal state" by eliminating the post-WWII political system imposed by the Allied Forces. From the early 1990s, movements have proliferated to search for Japanese identity as a response to prolonged economic depression, rise of unemployment and lack of political leadership. Conservative political forces and press have taken advantage of the situation to encourage nationalism, thus trying to revive conservatism in the country.

Under the circumstances, last year the Japanese government approved textbooks with a distorted and nationalistic version of history to be used in middle schools, and Prime Minister Koizumi paid a visit to the Yasukuni shrine on August 13, two days earlier than he had originally planned. At the visit he announced his "reflection on the past and [Japan's] anti-war commitment." Koizumi advanced the visit to the Shrine two days because of protest outside Japan, and he did seem to have made the visit to tame domestic politics. This year Koizumi and members of his cabinet also visited the shrine.

Demands for constitutional revision have been voiced in Japan since its legislation half a century earlier. Now, the revision of Article Nine

(Peace Article), has become an issue of now open debate, which had previously been regarded as taboo. The Constitution Investigation Committee set up by the Diet in February 2000 is expected to draft a revision in five years. However, public opinion favors cautious approach to the revision of the Article Nine. Given current distribution of seats in Diet, it seems very unlikely for the Diet to reach consensus over the revision in the near future.¹² Japan's neighbors want Japan to abide by the existing constitution and contribute to peace and stability of the region. They are worried that the right-wing movements in Japan might lead to a constitutional revision.

Because Japan regards the US-Japan alliance as the foundation of its defense and security policy, it is anticipated for Japan to consider plans in the future to gain recognition of the right to collective self-defense, readjustment of related laws to cope with situations outside Japan, joint participation in the MD, introduction of government satellite and air fuel supply system, for the sake of smooth functioning of the US-Japan security alliance.

2. Chinese Response

China has made clear demands to correct the distorted history about China in the Japanese textbooks and stop official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. State president Jiang Zemin in a meeting with former Prime Minister Nakasone requested special consideration of the Japanese government regarding the textbook issue (February 27, 2001). Foreign Minister Tang Jiashen held a press conference on March 5 asking for responsible measures on the part of the Japanese government and summoned the Japanese Ambassador in China to his office on

12 Inside the ruling party, Nakasone, the former Prime Minister, Yamasaki Taku and Gamei is active in the revision of Article Nine. However, Nonaka, Gato and Gono group take the cautious stance.

April 4. At the meeting, he expressed strong discomfort and dissatisfaction over the official approval of the distorted textbooks and demanded measures to match words with deeds. The Chinese Foreign Minister also called Japanese Foreign Minister Tanaka to relay the message that China hopes the Japanese government to take necessary and firm measures so as to gain trust from the people of Asia (May 8, 2001).

The spokesman of Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed strong anger to the approval of the right-wing history textbooks and demanded the Japanese government to respond positively to the legitimated claims of the Asian countries (May 10, 2001).

The Chinese Foreign Ministry cancelled a high-level official visit to Japan as a sign of protest against the issue, and cancelled the Liaison Department Chair of the PRC Communist Party Dai Bingguo's visit to Japan slated for April as well as that of Chairman of the Standing Committed of People's Assembly Li Peng. The Ministry delivered a memorandum on May 16, 2001 pointing out the distorted parts of the history textbooks and demanding effective measures by the Japanese government.

In relative terms, one can say that while Korea paid more attention to the distorted history textbooks, China was more sensitive to Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. Before the visit, China had warned the Japanese government that the Japan-China relationship would sour rapidly if the visit took place, regarding the visit as closely related to Japanese historical perceptions of its WWII-period government. Vice Foreign Minister Wang called the Japanese Ambassador on May 17 and demanded prudent response from Tokyo and repeated the demand during a May 24 Japan-China foreign ministerial meeting.

When Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to the Shrine seemed certain to take place, China through unofficial diplomatic routes demanded that Japan (1) have the visit be personal not official, and take place after August 15, (2) the Prime Minister announce publicly his reflection over

the past, and (3) to remove the names of first-degree war criminals from the list of enshrinement.

On August 13 immediately after Koizumi went to the Shrine, the Vice Foreign Minister Wang Guangya called Japanese Ambassador Anami to express opposition, and PRC Ambassador Woo Daiwei called on the Japanese Vice Foreign Minister to relay his strong protest. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the People's Assembly announced a statement on August 14 "expressing deep anger and demanding strict responsibility" on the part of the Japanese government.

To China the visit to Yasukuni Shrine more, than the textbooks, is seen to symbolically illustrate the revival of Japanese. The Chinese government seems to handle the distorted history textbook and the Yasukuni Shrine issues as a way to check the right-wing surge in Japan, so it will not push the issues too hard because there is more to gain in economic fields.¹³ Such perception has led to different responses by Korea and China to the visits by the officials of the Japanese Liberal Party. While President Kim Dae Jung rejected a meeting request, the State President Jiang Zemin, in accordance with China's pragmatic policy met the delegation and relayed stern protest of the Chinese people last year.

3. Korea's Response

Korea's position is that issues of the distorted history textbooks and the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by the Japanese prime minister are completely unacceptable to the Korean people. Although the government responded relatively moderately at early stages, demands by political circles and public opinion led President Kim Dae Jung to take

13 Chinese Vice President Hu Jintao told a delegation of Japan's ruling coalition that peaceful ties between the two countries will benefit both sides and that if Japan and China follow the policy of looking toward the future by making history serve as a mirror, they can achieve a sustainable-friendship. August 5, 2001.

a hardliner on the issue.

Before the visit took place, the Seoul government demanded cancellation of Koizumi's visit to the Shrine. The Korean Ambassador to Japan demanded prudent response on the part of the Japanese government. The Director-General of Asia-Pacific Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed Korea's apprehension over the visit.

On August 13, 2001, right after the visit the Korean Foreign Ministry expressed deep regret and demanded that Tokyo restrain future visits to the shrine. The Korean Vice Foreign Minister called the Japanese Ambassador to convey deep regret and demanded prudent action. Various diplomatic channels are used to express deep regret and to request future restraint. Pyongyang too reacted strongly to Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, and has been constantly drumming against the distorted history textbook issue as well.

The textbooks and the Yasukuni Shrine visits are seen as demonstrating lack of sincerity on the part of the Japanese government towards the neighboring countries, and a lack of objective historical perception. Revision of the Japanese constitution as well as reinforcement of the Self-defense Forces and the build up Japan's defense and security systems are feared to kindle an arms race and eventually lead to the decline of mutual trust among nations in the region. Therefore, discussions over the issues should proceed in a transparent manner and most importantly in the direction of securing the understanding of the neighboring countries.

IV. Impediments to Northeast Asian Cooperation

A closer look at the rapidly changing environment shows that the missile defense (MD) program and the issue of Japan's colonial past are the two core issues around which fault lines among major players have formed. MD forms a fault line between the US on the one hand, and

China and North Korea on the other. Japan and Taiwan seem to be inclined to the US position while South Korea appears to maintain calculated ambiguity, but in a manner somewhat sympathetic to the US position. China is concerned with MD not only from the perspective of global strategic competition with the US, but also due to the possible inclusion of Taiwan in the program.

Japan has often become a hostage to its own history involving the past military expansionism from the late 19th to the mid-20th Century. This issue recently came to the fore again due to the publication of middle school history textbooks containing distorted historical facts and the visit by the Japanese Prime Minister to the shrine commemorating war heroes including the war criminals indicted by the war tribunal of World War II. These issues are a stark reminder to most of Japan's neighbors of her expansionism and they are so sensitive as to significantly restrain bilateral relations with Japan. The colonial history poses another fault line alienating Japan from China, South Korea, North Korea and Taiwan which complicates American efforts to strengthen bilateral ties between US allies, Japan and South Korea.

MD and the issue of colonial and wartime history vividly show how complicated it is to build a durable structure of cooperation in Northeast Asia. They also highlight the inherent dilemmas facing each of the major players. The US, keen on reducing its security burden, wants Japan to increase her military role including participation in MD. But Tokyo's freedom of action in this regard is seriously constrained by lingering doubts about Japanese intentions, clouded by its past.

The US is implementing the MD program to reinforce its influence in the Northeast Asian region by enhancing the Japanese military role. Japan thinks that by taking advantage of the Bush administration's insistence on MD, it can achieve some technology transfer that will decisively enhance Japanese military capability. Military cooperation with the US is seen as an opportunity for military buildup with mini-

mal protest from neighboring countries. Although Japan has yet to announce its participation in the MD as strongly as it did with regard to the US theater missile defense (TMD) plan which was a precursor to MD, Tokyo seems inclined to the judge to participate in MD.

The Chinese position is quite ambivalent and seems to be in a dilemma. China wants to develop friendly relations with the US in many fields including trade, investment and management of security challenges such as North Korea and Taiwan.¹⁴ But the US insistence on MD, coupled with a possible Taiwanese role, seriously constrains the scope of security cooperation and exerts negative spillover to other areas. China is measuring whether Japanese autonomy in military affairs or cooperative security with the US is more threatening to China, and is vigilant against its autonomous military buildup commensurate with Japanese economic power. Reinforcement of the Japanese military power guided by the US assistance may be more tolerable, but Japan could easily gain leeway in case the US-China relationship were to sour in the future. Therefore, Beijing's perception is that the Japanese participation in MD is a threat to Chinese national security, and that Japanese military buildup should be prevented in any form.

In order to ameliorate the Chinese objections to the MD plan, the US is reportedly examining the possibility of allowing China to retain nuclear deterrence capability including experimental launch of missiles. The Democratic Party in the US is suspicious of the effectiveness of Bush administration's MD program by pointing out that the very idea of maintaining world peace through deterrence contradicts the international post-Cold War trend.

China, on the other hand, is warning that the US MD system will lead to reinforcing the nuclear capability of China. China warns of

14 Yinhay Ahn, "Sino-US Relations and Taiwan After 9.11 Terrorist Attacks," Rikyo University, Tokyo, Japan, August 25, 2002.

increase in the number and improved accuracy of nuclear warheads in action, and development of nuclear devices, in order to nullify the effectiveness of the MD project. China does not think that the MD is intended to defend from nuclear attacks by North Korea and Iraq, as claimed by the US. In China's view, it is China that the US perceives as the real target. The evidence shows that it would take at least fifteen years for North Korea to develop a missile that could reach the US shores, and Pyongyang will not commit such suicidal act because it is well aware of the consequences of retaliation from the US.

Military specialists in China agree that the US hegemony will continue for at least ten more years. The 2002 Report of the US Department of Defense states that since China will rise as a great economic and military power, it will be inevitable for the focus of US military strategy to move to Asia. If the scenario is actualized, China will be a new frontier of confrontation. Arguments are made in China to consider signing a military alliance with India and strategic alliance with Russia, both of which possess nuclear weapons. Considering complicated and delicate relations with India and Russia, such alliances seem unlikely in the near future. In the short run, China will try to secure stability by maintaining its policy of cooperation with the great powers and establish peace in the Northeast Asian region based upon multinational security cooperation.

China's new security concept demands, on the one hand, fundamental changes in the management of the international community, while on the other hand advocating "equality" of international community, thus to weaken the US influence while enhancing its own status on the international scene.¹⁵ Such Chinese strategy contradicts the US strategy to sustain its sole hegemonic status in the region by relying upon military power. The US-China relationship might fall into

15 Jia Quinnguo, "US and China Relations After Sept. 11: Time for Change," *China Internet Information Center*, 2002. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/26340.htm>.

a state of hegemonic dilemma.

The future of the US-China relationship, therefore, depends upon the possibility of reaching strategic compromise.¹⁶ If the two nations fail to resolve their contradictory objectives, their bilateral relations will deteriorate. President Bush seems determined to carry out the MD program even at the expense of nullifying the ABM treaty. China perceives that the deteriorating relationship with Washington will lead to the rearmament of Japan, which would pose a threat to China.

Japan needs to nurture good relations with her neighbors as a necessary condition to increase her international role including permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council. But Japan's insufficient break from past colonialism and war-making does not allow much movement in the security area. Given the domestic situation in Japan, it does not look easy for Japan's political leaders to take any bold steps on the history issues.

The distortion of history textbooks and the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine have made Japan's relationship with neighboring countries uncomfortable, but what makes it worse is right-wing conservatism in Japan. According to Professor Okonogi, there were opinions despising Korea. He pointed out that more efforts should be made to correct the distorted history textbooks rather than mere denunciation of the issue itself.¹⁷ In fact, Japan needs to collaborate with the US and Korea to check China's rising power. The textbook and the Yasukuni Shrine issues have to be seen within the context of Japan's domestic politics. China and Korea should demand more active measures on the part of Tokyo to resolve both textbook and the Yasukuni Shrine issues. In the future, Japan will play a role of checking China because

16 Eric A. Mcvaddon, "U.S.-China Relations: Implications for Northeast Asia in an Evolving Security Environment," *Conflict and Cooperation between China and the United States*, Organized by the Korean Association of International Studies, August 24, 2002

17 Masao Okonogi, Professor of Keio University, October 2001.

it does not want the expansion of Chinese military power in the region. Against this backdrop, the right-wing conservatism of Japan as expressed in the form of distortion of history textbooks and the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine will act as fundamental impediments to regional cooperation.

V. Conclusion

The US wants Japan to play the military backup in the region. Accordingly, if Japan actively participates in MD, Japan could be under the influence of the US and this would provide Washington with leverage over the Japanese military power and technology. On the part of Japan, participation in the MD project will remove the constraints of the peace constitution upon its military expansion. Korea is absolutely against any Japanese military power buildup with the implementation of MD program that exceeds the level of national self-defense. The US MD program is generating excessive worries in Korea and China against Japanese participation in the program.

Such worries are rooted in the historical perception of Japan and its lack of sensitivity to the neighboring countries. Since Korea and China are strongly protesting against the issues whenever problems arise, Japan's attitude towards its colonial and early 20th century wartime behavior represented by history textbooks and the visit to the Yasukuni Shrine remain as obstacles to regional cooperation.

Conflicts between South Korea and Japan are a weakening factor to the trilateral security cooperative system among the US, Japan and South Korea. The US could play a moderating role between Seoul and Tokyo because cooperative relationship between the two countries is the key to its Northeast Asian security strategy. But the task does not look easy, given the potential that the history issue could come alive like a ghost to haunt the future relationship. Korea-Japan relationship

has significantly improved following Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's two visits to Korea, and exchange visits of President Kim Dae-jung and Prime Minister Koizumi on the occasion of the recent Korea/Japan FIFA World Cups. But, even during this period, Koizumi paid another visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and high school textbooks containing distorted historical facts were again published. This shows the volatility of the history issue.

The fault lines posed by MD and the history issue run the dual risk of weakening the strategic solidarity of the US-led alliance and increasing the strategic competition between the US and China. As for MD, it is particularly important to find a way out that is acceptable to all on how to de-link the North Korean missile problem and the Taiwan issue from MD. It is not clear whether and how we can do it at this stage, as concrete plans regarding MD are still not available. But I think there could be a way out. China and the US could do some strategic bargaining, for example, China can encourage North Korea to resolve its missile problem through negotiation with the US, and in return, the US can delay the participation of Taiwan in MD.

As for the history issue, Japan should take urgent action to suggest a formula acceptable to South Korea. Japan is now conducting a joint research with Korea on history issues and its own work on exploring the possibility of an alternative facility replacing the Yasukuni Shrine. The longer meaningful solution delayed, the harder it would be to retrieve damage to Japan-South Korea relations and the US-led alliance structure.

The overall situation in Northeast Asia is volatile due to the existence of different sets of dilemma facing each of the players in the region. MD and Japanese history are the two core issues highlighting the structural impediments blocking the development of an institutional mechanism for regional cooperation. But they do not represent all the unresolved issues—and the September 11 terrorist attack also adds yet another element to the dilemma.

The upside of the security impact is that the incident has brought Sino-US security relations closer. The downside is that it hardens the US perception of the North Korean regime. North Korea's track record of missile export is now viewed with greater alarm by US strategic planners; North Korean missiles ending up in terrorists' hands is one of the most horrible scenarios to them.

It is still too early to predict how the overall balance sheet of the security equation will look like in the next couple of years. But it will affect the security environment of Northeast Asia in a very fundamental way.